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DE RUEHBO #0917 0672352
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P 072352Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1826
INFO RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0069
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR 9295
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 5990
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 1363
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 6642
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 4326
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDDTA/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1900

UNCLAS BOGOTA 000917

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: COLOMBIANS MARCH FOR VICTIMS OF PARA AND STATE
VIOLENCE

REF: A. BOGOTA 470 B. BOGOTA 764

¶1. (U) Summary: On March 6, tens of thousands marched in cities in Colombia to commemorate victims of paramilitary and state violence. Turnout was less than that of the February 4 march against the FARC, but participation exceeded organizers' expectations. March organizer Ivan Cepeda, head of the National Movement for the Victims of State Violence, called the event a "political blow" to the GOC. The GOC provided full authorization and security for the marches. End Summary.

THOUSANDS MARCH AGAINST PARAS

¶2. (U) On March 6, tens of thousands of Colombians marched to commemorate victims of paramilitaries and certain state actors. The largest turnout occurred in Bogota, but thousands also marched in Baranquilla, Medellin, Pereira, Manizalles, Cucuta, and Arauca, and Bucaramanga. The marches occurred without serious incident, although a group of anarchists disrupted the Bogota march. No serious injuries were reported. The GOC provided full authorization and security for the events.

¶3. (U) The march, which was organized by the National Movement for the Victims of State Violence, was supported by the opposition Polo Democratico Party, and labor, student, and human rights groups (ref B). The organizers claimed the march was apolitical, but the rhetoric leading up to the march was anti-GOC. The organizers placed photos of massacres and other news clips of past violence in Bogota's Plaza Bolivar and lined a main road (7th Ave) in the capital with black body bags. Ivan Cepeda, head of the Victims Movement, called the march a "political blow" to the GOC.

INTERNATIONAL COMPONENT

¶4. (U) The March 6 event was substantially smaller than the February 4 march against the FARC in which millions of Colombians participated. Still, turnout exceeded organizers' expectations. In addition to the events in Colombia, marches also occurred in Washington, Madrid, Berlin and Buenos Aires. In Buenos Aires, participants condemned Colombia's attack in Ecuador and operation against Raul Reyes. In Washington, protesters criticized Plan Colombia and the U.S.-Colombia

Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Marches in Paris, Caracas, and Quito voiced support for Venezuelan President Chavez.

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